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SUBJECT: St. Lucia Minister of Commerce Laments Government
Inefficiencies, Lack of Responsiveness

Summary

11. (SBU) St. Lucia Commerce Minister Tessa Mangal outlined challenges facing the government in St. Lucia from poor training and lack of professional standards among civil servants in a December 4 meeting with the ChrgC). Mangal expressed frustration over the lack of a customer service mentality, which she noted is a big obstacle to a country basing its development on tourism and foreign investment. Mangal, the only female member of the Cabinet, is a plain-speaking and dynamic minister with prior experience in law and tourism. She is a close confidant of PM King's. End summary.

Lack of Standards in Government

12. (SBU) St. Lucia Commerce Minister Tessa Mangal told the ChrgC) that she is frustrated with the slow and unprofessional way in which public servants deal with requests from the public. Mangal said she hopes to improve the systemization of government services to more quickly and efficiently deal with requests, but acknowledges that significant obstacles remain. Comparing St. Lucia to Barbados, Mangal said her country had far to go to match the quality seen in Barbados. The perception that customer service equates with subservience has prevented greater acceptance of a proper service mentality from taking root in St. Lucia, she maintained. Mangal, fresh from the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Trinidad was hoping to organize an OECS Business Forum in St. Lucia during 2010. She welcomed participation from the U.S. Embassy in providing a speaker, and the ChrgC) agreed to look for ways to assist the program.

Expropriation and Re-export Duties

13. (SBU) Poloffs raised the issue of the expropriation case in Anse Galet and the lack of responsiveness from Prime Minister King in responding to a personal letter from the ChrgC) and numerous following interventions. Mangal promised to look into the matter, and believed that the long-standing court case that had prevented

development should have given greater leniency toward the Crown's compulsory expropriation. American investors are not the only ones being targeted by expropriation rulings, she noted, claiming that numerous St. Lucians have also expressed anger at losing their land.

14. (SBU) The ChargC) reiterated our strong support for the American Chamber of Commerce in St. Lucia and said we hoped it will play an important role in promoting dialogue on trade and investment in St. Lucia. The AmCham in St. Lucia lists re-export duties as their top advocacy concern. This 5 percent duty prevents the return of poorly selling merchandise as well as the holding of product shows that display a wide assortment of goods. Mangal acknowledged the letter that the President of the AmCham had sent to PM King and had organized the legal staff to look into this customs issue and make recommendations on how to address the problems identified.

Comment

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15. (SBU) Mangal has a difficult Ministerial Portfolio in a tough economy. While she is making progress on her issues, her business background has led her to focus on improving customer relations, which she sees as a missing component that is integral for a tourist-dependent economy. End Comment

Bio Note: Charlotte Tessa Mangal

16. (SBU) Minister Mangal has a background in law and tourism, having worked her way up with local tourism providers. Mangal's first stint in government was notable for her dismissal along with two other senators in 1997 by PM Kenny Anthony for refusing to guarantee a \$1.5 million USD bank loan to soon to be bankrupt Helen Air. She returned in 2007 as Minister of Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations before moving to the Office of the Prime Minister, where she was tasked with handling the Independence Celebration. Mangal was promoted to Minister of Commerce in February 2009, and is currently the only female serving in the Cabinet, where she takes the lead in promoting issues of gender equality. She was the only Minister to attend a recent candlelit vigil for recognition of Global AIDS day. Mangal, who is close to the PM, appears to be one of the more competent and capable ministers with the rare willingness to try new approaches to bring needed dynamism into the conduct of government business.

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